

# Curbelo on South Dade Agriculture

In December of 2014, the Obama Administration announced its intentions to establish normal relations with Cuba's military dictatorship. While this decision has invoked passionate debate from those on both sides of the issue, it is important to recognize the effects rapprochement with Cuba will have not only on our national security, but the burden it could also place on hard-working farmers, their families, and their employees in our own backyard.

The agriculture industry in Florida, and specifically in South Dade, is one of the most vibrant and diverse in the nation. Some in Congress are advocating for allowing the importation of Cuban agricultural goods to the United States. If this were to happen, South Florida farm-

ers would be forced to compete directly with the Castro dictatorship, who exploit Cuban agriculture workers by paying them exponentially lower wages than their American counterparts and denying them basic human and labor rights.

There are also severe concerns with the possibility of invasive pests and disease reaching American shores if crops imported from Cuba are insufficiently sprayed. With last year's devastating



**Congressman  
Carlos  
Curbelo**

Oriental Fruit Fly quarantine and flooding in South Florida, along with Citrus Greening decimating orange groves throughout the state, we must provide our farmers and agriculture experts with the resources they need to grow healthy crops. We must not cut corners when it comes to the food production that our families will consume, and we must ensure that standard precautionary steps are in place from any country exporting food to the United States. That way we can guarantee that only the best produce is brought to our nation's grocery stores and markets. For these reasons and others, I will continue opposing the unilateral lifting of economic sanctions against the Castro dictatorship, so long as the United States' safety concerns go unaddressed and Cuban agri-

culture workers continue to be treated as indentured servants.

The state of Florida is home to many fruit and vegetable crops that because of our favorable climate can be grown year-round. I am proud to represent in Congress the 11,000 men and women working in the South Dade agriculture community, which generates more than \$1.6 billion annually. However, we know how vulnerable our farmers are to natural disasters, invasive species, and disease. It is imperative that any country trading with the United States, especially Cuba, is operating at a level playing field with our agriculture workers. I will continue to champion the priorities of South Dade farmers in Congress and oppose unfair trade with the Castro regime.